

U.S. 189

Canyon roadwork may start in May

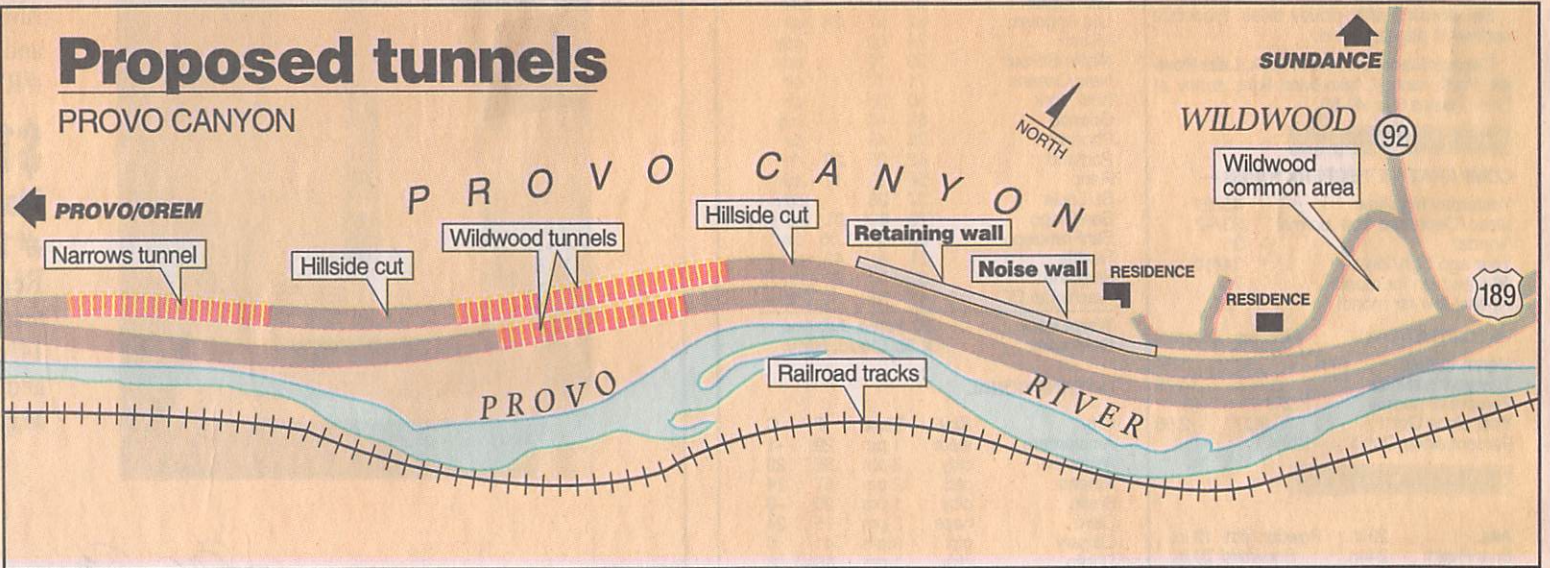
UDOT working to trim cost of next phase of Provo Canyon highway to \$31 million.

By Brooke Adams 11-30-93
Deseret News staff writer

PROVO — Construction of the next section of U.S. 189 through Provo Canyon should get under way in May 1994 — provided the Utah Department of Transportation can cut and paste dollars to pay for the project.

The "close" to final version of the design came in with a whopping price tag: \$49 million. But UDOT officials say they'll whittle the cost to about \$31 million and find the money to pay for it.

If so, work on the two-mile section of road from Upper Falls to just beyond the Sundance turnoff could begin around May. It will take two years to complete the



project, which will end at the Wasatch County line, according to Ed Keane, UDOT chief geotechnical engineer. Keane went over the project Monday with members of a lay advisory committee.

After tinkering with the design for the roadway since June, UDOT finally has a

plan it believes works and satisfies requests of various groups, Keane said. The design keeps the road and retaining walls out of the river, uses three tunnels to shuttle traffic through sections of mountain and stays as far as possible from the Wildwood community.

All the fidgeting and final details yielded a surprise: an engineer's estimate for the project more than doubled the ballpark figure UDOT gave it in June.

Three factors are primarily responsible

Please see **ROAD** on B2

ROAD

Continued from B1 11-30-93

for the increase in the project's price: longer tunnels, higher retaining walls and more extensive excavation work than originally planned.

Of the cost, \$18.1 million pays for the tunnels, about \$1.2 million for landscaping and about \$10 million for carting 506,000 cubic yards of soil excavated from the area out of the canyon.

And that's right where UDOT first said "whoa."

UDOT plans to shave \$10 million by keeping the soil at the site, using it to build up a slope near the Riverbend Trailer Park, Keane said. The department still needs to trim \$5 million to \$8 million more from the project, he said.

UDOT apparently can live with a project that costs about \$31 million, Keane said. The agency has \$25 million set aside for the next phase.

"It's my understanding they want to go ahead with the project," Keane said.

The department will review the plan Dec. 6 with several anglers' groups. A formal in-house and interagency review will begin the next day, Keane said. The project will be opened for bidding probably in March.

At least two committee members are taking the April/May start date lightly.

"This thing could blow up again just like it did last year," Tom Giles said.

Last January several environmental and wildlife groups protested a modified design drafted by UDOT that called for bridging the river twice near the Sundance turnoff (SR-92). The original de-

Fitting new road through Narrows

Squeezing Provo Canyon Road through the Narrows area, between Wildwood and Vivian Park, will require several significant changes:

- The Salt Lake Aqueduct will be relocated on the north canyon mountain slope.
- A vent structure for the aqueduct currently at road level also will be relocated.
- UDOT owns the Riverbend Trailer Park and will use the area to accommodate the road.
- UDOT also plans to buy or condemn the Chalet Cafe, which will be razed to make an entry to a small residential area adjacent to the river.
- Anglers will access the Provo River near Wildwood from a frontage road that splits off the up-canyon traffic lanes. The access will have 11 parking spaces. The one-way frontage road will tie back into the Provo Canyon Road just before U-92.
- The intersection of U-92 and Provo Canyon Road will be shifted up-canyon slightly, providing better views of oncoming traffic and more buffer for the Wildwood area.

Recreationists should note:

- UDOT will continue the recreation path, which currently ends at Bridal Veil Falls, up the canyon to Vivian Park using the railroad right-of-way. The path will be built in conjunction with the road. The Heber Creeper train will continue to travel to Vivian Park, where a new turnout will be built for the train.

sign outlined in a 1990 environmental impact statement on the project called for two tunnels through the area.

But UDOT said geological information indicated the proposed tunnels wouldn't work and suggested a combination of tunnels and bridges instead.

Both the Division of Wildlife Resources and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which have to approve any work that affects the river, made it clear the bridge plan was unlikely to win their support. UDOT then returned to the tunnel option.

Julie Mack, environmental facilitator for Sundance (which also opposed the bridge plan), said she was "glad we reached a compromise, and I do believe this is a compromise."

"Wildwood is protected and the integrity of the river is maintained," Mack said. "It's a compromise."

But some Wildwood residents remain concerned. Last week stakes marking the road were placed through their area. The location of the stakes doesn't match what residents have seen on plans, and, if correctly located, carve out more space than the residents planned on.

"It hasn't laid us to rest," said Susan Stern, Wildwood resident. "I'm not sure anyone at Wildwood is yet until we find out just what those stakes mean and how the property is going to be impacted."

UDOT plans to send an engineer out to check the location of the stakes, Stern said.

Hurdle cleared for building 2 tunnels in Provo Canyon

Transfer of funds paves the way for 2nd phase of road-widening project.

By Dennis Romboy
Deseret News staff writer

1-17-96

PROVO — Construction of the tunnels section of U.S. 189 in Provo Canyon is scheduled to begin this March, now that the Utah Transportation Commission has funded a shortfall in the project's estimated cost.

The commission last week trans-

ferred \$3.6 million from a Midway-to-Heber City project to reach San Francisco-based Obayashi Corp.'s \$34 million bid on the canyon project. The contractor's bid was the lowest of seven.

Larry Buss, Utah Department of Transportation Region 3 engineer, said UDOT is finalizing contract details and probably will award it to Obayashi by the end of the week.

Plans call for a 2.7-mile stretch of U.S. 189 to be widened to four lanes from Upper Falls to Wildwood. Construction will include twin tunnels just below the Sundance turnoff. The 370-foot-

long down-canyon tunnel and 340-foot up-canyon tunnel make for one of the most unique transportation undertakings in Utah history.

"We want it to be a showpiece project," Buss said.

Some 750,000 tons of dirt and rock cut from the mountainside will be compacted at the base of Deer Creek Dam for a future phase of canyon road reconstruction.

The second phase of a four-phase plan to rebuild U.S. 189 from the mouth of the canyon to Heber City has been years in coming. Lack of funds and wrangling over environmental concerns prompted numerous design changes.

Last-minute calls to halt the second phase from several Utah

County government and business leaders, including Robert Redford's Sundance resort, went unheeded. Critics argued the project shouldn't go forward until UDOT has money to build phase three from Wildwood Deer Creek Dam. They say UDOT is building a "road to nowhere."

But transportation officials are anxious to get started.

"I really think we'll get in and get the thing done as quickly as we can," Buss said.

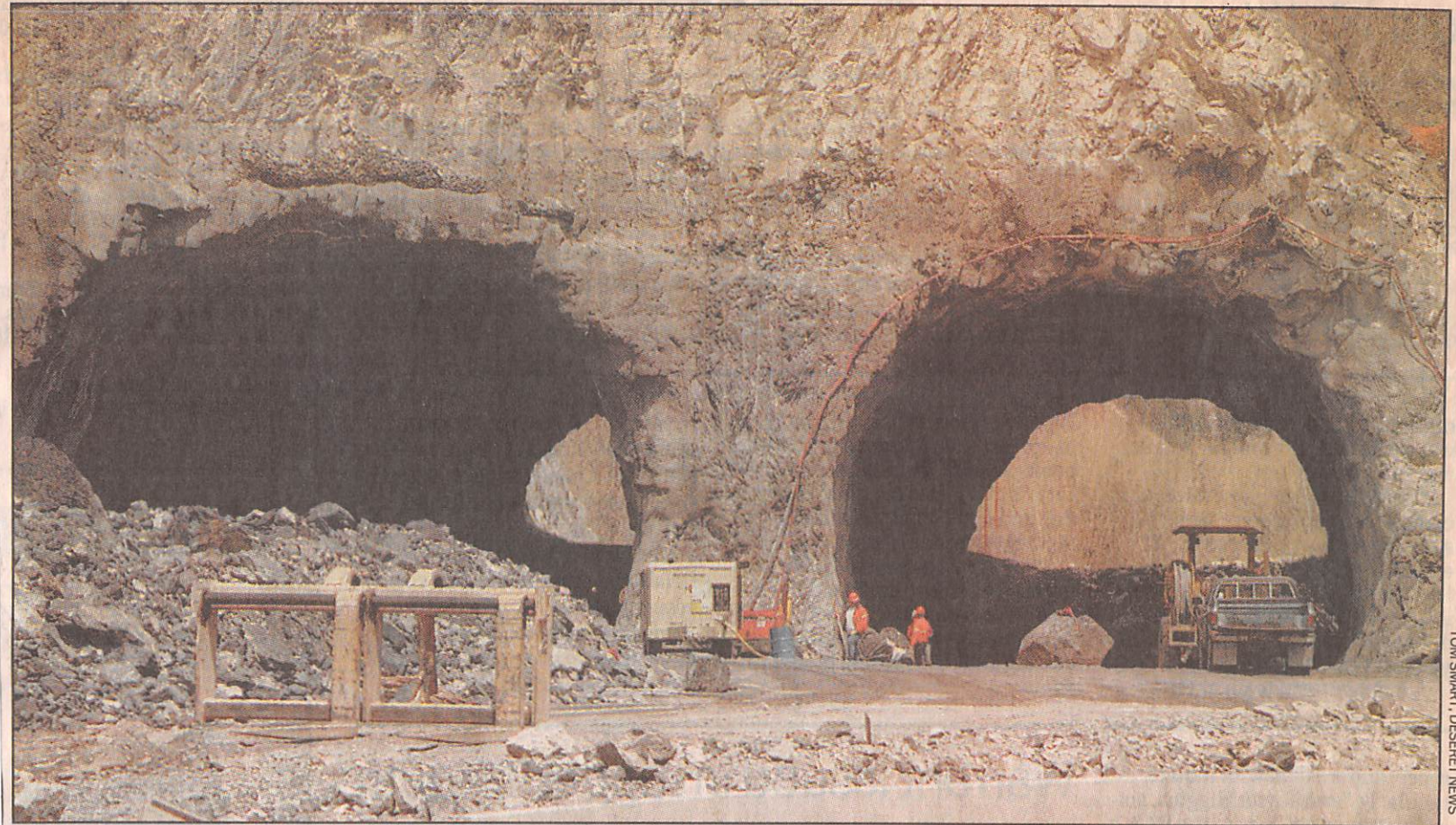
Construction will begin in March and run through the middle of 1998, he said. Obayashi, however, wants to finish the major part of the project, such as the tunnels, by fall 1997.

"We're obviously going to work with the contractor toward that goal," Buss said.

Motorists traveling the canyon can expect 15-minute delays during the day and hourlong waits at night, Buss said. Construction crews intend to do most of the excavating and hauling after sunset.

Buss welcomes the keen eye environmentalists and conservationists will likely have on the project.

"We'll make every possible attempt to keep this completely environmentally sound," he said.



Highway tunnel project shaping up in Provo Canyon

Motorists will someday pass through the twin tunnels blasted through a mountainside on U.S. 189 in Provo Canyon. The passages are part of \$34 million reconstruction project on

a two-mile stretch of highway between Upper Falls and Wildwood. The road is being widened from two lanes to four. The Utah Department of Transportation decided to build the

tunnels to keep the scenic byway as far from the Provo River as possible. The construction project is scheduled to be completed a year from this summer.

2 May 1997

Please see **TUNNEL** on B2

Canyon Project 60 Percent Done

BY JAMES POWELL

Special To The Wave

9-24-97

Road construction in the narrows of Provo Canyon is nearly 60 percent complete, Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT) officials say, and is expected to be finished next fall, only a few months behind the original mid-summer completion date.

Crews are currently working on road base preparation, tunnel construction and stabilizing the north slopes where rock slides have caused several accidents and delays since the project began in January 1996.

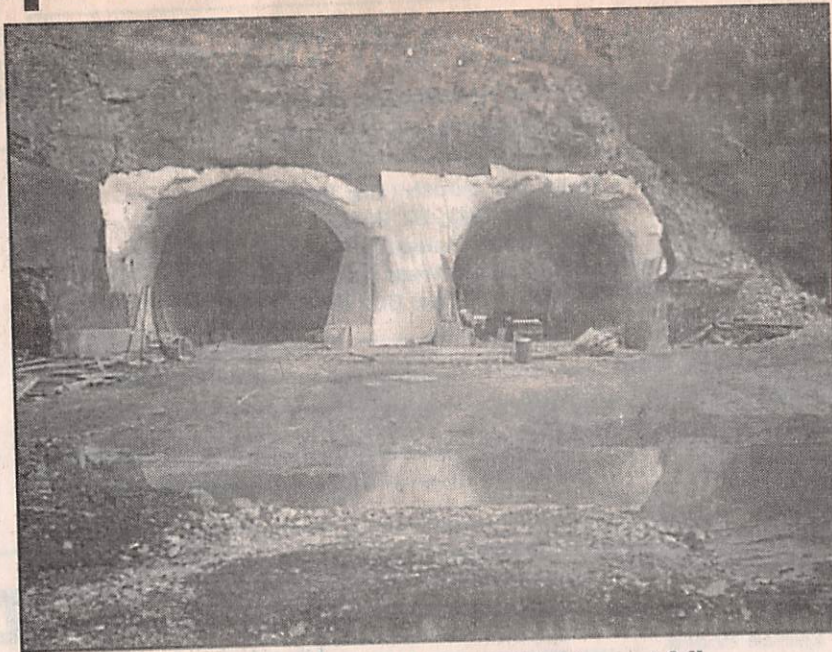
These unforeseen problems have not only extended the completion date but have also expanded the price tag. The construction on the 2.1 mile stretch is expected to cost \$3 million more than the original estimate of \$34 million.

All this for a road design that some say was not necessary.

"We're heartsick over what's happened," says Julie Mack, spokeswoman for the Provo River Coalition. She says what was really needed was a road that "improved safety yet retained the beauty of the canyon."

Like Mack, many environmentalists and preservationists pushed for a safer two-lane road with improved passing lanes, wider shoulders and more side rails, but UDOT officials felt the increased traffic called for something more.

The number of vehicles passing through the canyon is expected to jump to 18,000 per day by 2020, more than double the average of



Provo Canyon's expansion should be completed by next fall.

7,100 in 1997. UDOT officials say that a four-lane road was necessary to accommodate that increase.

But the four-lane design has come across more problems than just preservationist opponents. Rock slides, accidents and cracks in both 300-foot tunnels have delayed the progress of the construction.

UDOT project manager Jeff Baird says the cracks are no longer a risk since heavy "rock bolts" were drilled into place to help stabilize the tunnels. Baird went on to say that crews are currently working to stabilize the slide area to prevent future problems and that many of the accidents were rear-end collisions which could have been prevented had the drivers used more

caution.

Many of the problems have been located on the stretch of road beginning one-half mile east of the Sundance turnoff where the road is limited to one lane. A stop light is being used to control traffic and drivers can expect delays of 15 to 20 minutes until the other lane is added, which Baird says will occur sometime before winter.

Drivers should also be aware that the speed limit dropped to 40 mph through the work site with 30 mph advisory speeds around curves and detours.

Baird said that aside from the normal adverse conditions such as ice and blowing snow, no other delays are foreseen due to the construction this winter.

Cold Winter Forecasted By Almanac

9-24-97
With pronounced changes in nighttime temperatures, summer is fast becoming another memory and fall and winter are knocking at the door.

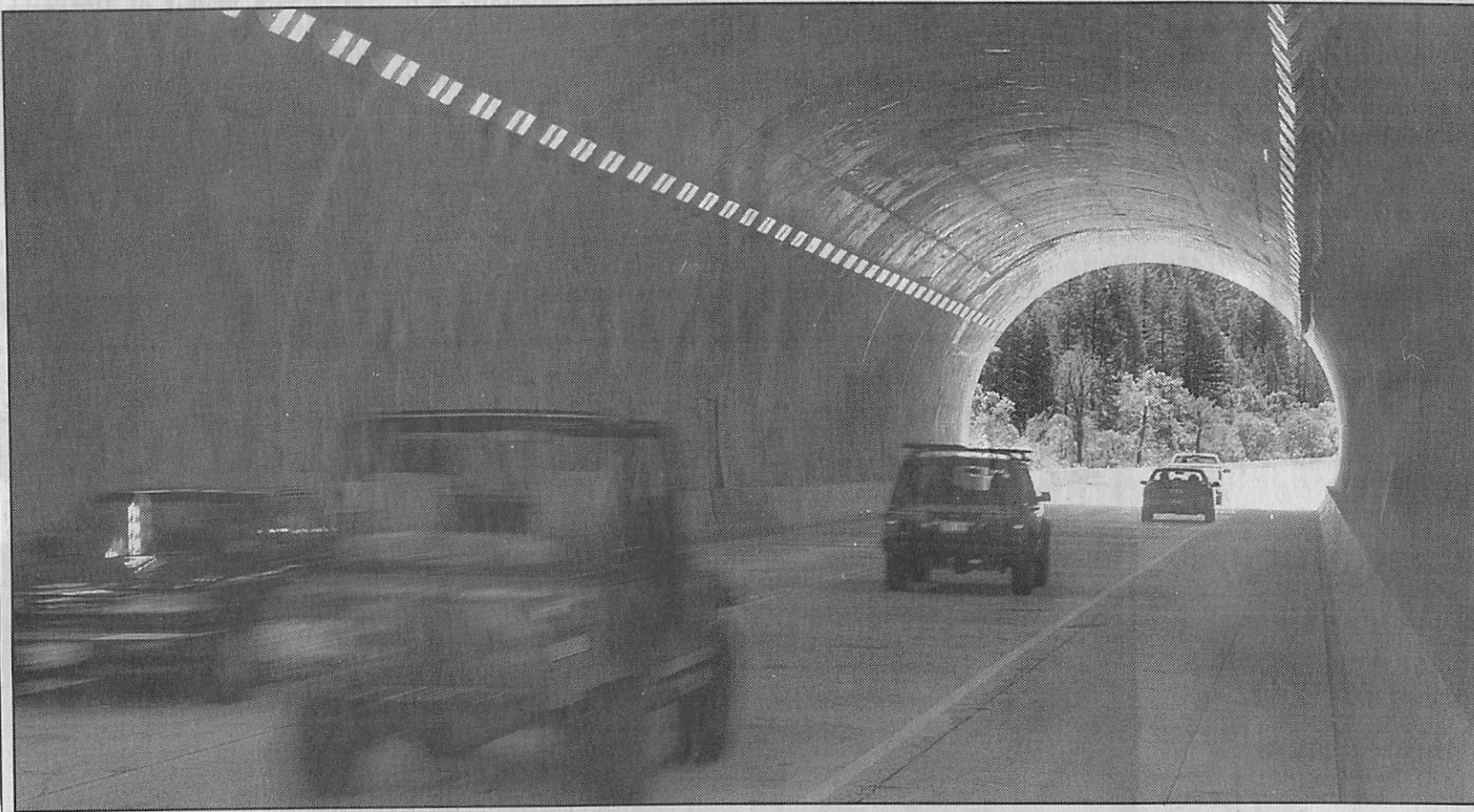
And according to The Old Farmer's Almanac, 1998 edition, "the winter season looks like it will be a nasty one, even by Rocky Mountain standards."

The Farmer's Almanac has made predictions about regional and national forecasts since 1819. This year's predictions seem to coincide with the "El Nino" effect, a warmer body of ocean water off the South American coast that is predicted to give the western United States

a more severe winter than normal.

The Farmer's Almanac echoes El Nino's warnings. "The period from November through March will be about four degrees colder than normal, with above-normal snowfall." The almanac predicts a white Christmas for the Rocky Mountain region and says snowfall will occur in mid-April 1998 and early May, with a cooler summer promised in 1998 by about two degrees.

The east coast, particularly New England, is predicted to receive above-normal temperatures for the upcoming winter.



JASON OLSON/The Daily Herald

Zooming through: Automobiles travel through the first of two new tunnels in Provo Canyon to open to traffic.

First tunnel in canyon project opens to traffic

Sat 8-8-98

The DAILY HERALD

PROVO — The first of two tunnels constructed in the Provo Canyon highway project was opened for travel Wednesday. 8/5

Clarissa Grimes, office manager for Obayashi Corporation,

contractors for the 2.7-mile construction project, said the southbound tunnel opened for two-way traffic Wednesday morning.

"The first car went through the tunnel at around 10 a.m.," she said.

All southbound traffic is now

passing through the tunnel. Grimes said all traffic is completely off the old road.

Jeff Baird, Utah Department of Transportation project engineer, said the second tunnel will probably not be opened until October.

"Right now we have only the southbound tunnel open, although we are directing two-way traffic through it. We may have to move the traffic back and forth between it and the old highway as we proceed with construction," he said.